



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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President Shelly salutes past, present and future Navajo veterans



Top, saluting Navajo veterans at Navajo Veterans Park in Window Rock. Bottom, the names of Navajo veterans who paid the ultimate sacrifice are listed on the KIA Wall on the east side of the park. This year, 11 names from Navajo veterans killed in action since 2003 will be added to the wall. (Photos by Rick Abasta)

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Thank you, veterans.

Navajo veterans proudly served in the Army, Air Force, Marines and Navy since World War I to our most recent war in Afghanistan.

Navajos have always answered the call to war without hesitation. The most famous are the Navajo Code Talkers, who saved the world from destruction through the use of Diné bizaad, the Navajo language.

Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly salutes these brave men and women for their faithful service to the U.S. and the Navajo Nation. Let us honor them respectfully on Veteran's Day, he said.

"Ahe'hee to our brave Navajo veterans for their faithful service. We appreciate your service to our great Navajo Nation," President Shelly said. "We must do more to meet your needs with health care, employment and housing.

"On behalf of a grateful Nation, we salute and honor you on this day," he added.

The Navajo Department of Veterans Affairs is hosting a Veteran's Day celebration on Tuesday at Navajo Veterans Park in Window Rock, beginning at 7:30 a.m. and ending at 2:45 p.m.

The department continues housing construction across all five agencies of the Navajo Nation. They will construct 75 homes this year and the same amount the following three years for a total of 300 new homes for Navajo veterans.

The veterans housing initiative is for one, two and three bedroom homes. Fifteen homes per agency will be constructed each year.

President Shelly said this housing initiative is important to address homelessness and substandard housing conditions many veterans face on the Navajo Nation. Post traumatic stress syndrome and physical disabilities are other areas that need attention, he said.

For the Veteran's Day celebration, the Twin Warriors Society will post colors and Miss Navajo Nation McKeon Dempsey will sing the National Anthem in Navajo.

The daylong celebration will feature guest speakers and a ceremony honoring Navajo veterans killed in action. The eastern side of the park features the KIA Wall, which lists the names of veterans killed in battle. Eleven names will be added to the wall this year for those who paid the ultimate sacrifice since 2003.

President Shelly and Speaker Pro Temp Bates will honor veterans with a wreath of honor ceremony at the KIA Wall. During this time, the Navajo Nation Band will be performing "Taps" to honor those lost in battle.

Edsel Pete, department manager for NDVA, said the first 50 people to the event are going to receive duffel bags. The first 150 people will also get a ticket for lunch.

He said the memorandum of understanding with Indian Health Services will be discussed and that representatives from IHS will be available to answer questions. The Veterans Affairs Vet Mobile will also be onsite for services. This mobile hospital travels across the Navajo Nation to provide veterans with limited medical services and screenings.

"Sharon Manuelito from the Navajo Department of Veterans Affairs will provide a presentation on homelessness," Pete said. "The Navajo Nation Band will also be performing music during lunch."

Pete is the new department manager for NDVA, after the retirement of David Nez in Oct. He previously served as the administrative services officer for two years before his promotion.

The event is open to the public.

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